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THE WAR AND WOMEN'S WORK IN ENGLAND

The effects of the war on the employment of women in any one of the countries involved can, of course, be only incompletely seen or understood at this time. In England, however, certain valuable reports already available on women's war work set forth some definite problems relating to the work of women that have arisen in the greatest industrial nation among the belligerents. The widespread depression and serious unemployment immediately after the outbreak of the war, the organization of relief work among unemployed women, the protest of the working women against the attempt to organize women of leisure to make garments for soldiers, the opposition to the women's war register in the spring of 1915, the gradual expansion of the new demand for women's labor, particularly in the munitions trades, the effect of the Munitions act on women's employment, the readjustment of trade-union rules, the suspension of protective legislation, and the results of this suspension—these problems are of interest to us now in the United States, since it is possible that we may have similar issues to face in the not-distant future.

This article must necessarily be confined to a discussion of the war in relation to the employment of women in industry, but the effect of war on the non-industrial employment of women may be

discussed in a later article, together with certain general questions as to the effect of the war on the gainfully employed women of England.

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON THE STATE OF
EMPLOYMENT

The immediate effect of the war on British industry was "an abrupt and considerable curtailment of production." In August, 1914, there was a great deal of unemployment and short time among both men and women. The report of the Board of Trade on conditions at this time is as follows:

Orders both in home and foreign trade were withheld or cancelled, large numbers of factories went on short time, and in a number of cases employees were provisionally given notice of discharge. These measures were largely precautionary and were due to uncertainty as to the conditions under which trade would be carried on in war time. By September, however, it had become clearer in many industries how far markets were likely to be restricted. In a few trades employees were dismissed after being on short time for a few weeks, but in a much larger number of cases the factories resumed their normal working.¹

Unemployment was more serious among women than among men for the following reasons: (1) The cotton trade, the greatest of the women's industries, suffered more than any other great industry in England from the first shock of the war. (2) The so-called "luxury trades" all over the country, and particularly in London, were terribly depressed as a result of the so-called "panic economy" that followed the outbreak of the war, and these were also "women's trades." In dressmaking, millinery, blouse-making, and similar trades employment was practically at a standstill; and large numbers of women clerks, domestic servants, charwomen, actresses, typists, manicurists, and other "toilet-specialty" employees were suddenly thrown out of work. (3) Working women were more adversely affected by the dislocation of trade than workmen because the army offered an immediate alternative employment to men. The total reduction in the number of workmen employed as between July, 1914, and October, 1914, was

¹ *Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in October, 1914*, Cd. 7703, p. 15.

10.7 per cent, which was almost precisely equal to the percentage of workmen known to have joined the military and naval forces.

On the other hand, the mobilization not only failed to offer an immediate opening for unemployed women, but actually aggravated their plight, since the wives and other dependent women relatives of reservists and others who joined the colors went in search of work; and until the vexed question of separation allowances had been solved these soldiers' dependents increased the number of women who registered at the labor exchanges for work.

EXTENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN

Carefully prepared reports of the Board of Trade furnish interesting data relating to the extent of unemployment after the outbreak of the war and to the gradual recovery in 1915. Table I

TABLE I
EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRY, JULY, 1914, COMPARED
WITH LATER MONTHS

	September, 1914	October, 1914	December, 1914	February, 1915
Still on full time.....	53.5	61.9	66.6	75.0
On overtime.....	2.1	5.9	10.8	10.9
On short time.....	36.0	26.0	19.4	12.6
Contraction of numbers employed...	8.4	6.2	3.2	1.5
Employed in July, 1914.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

has been compiled from the three reports on the state of employment in October, 1914, December, 1914, and February, 1915,¹ to show the state of employment in industrial occupations for women during this period. The number of persons employed in July, 1914, is taken as 100.

No figures are available for August, 1914; but in September, when the improvement had set in, only 53.5 per cent of the women employed in July were still on full time, and 44.4 per cent of all the women employed in July were out of work or were working on short time. Both unemployment and short time, however, steadily

¹ Cd. 7703, Cd. 7755, and Cd. 7850.

decreased, and the reports for October, 1914, December, 1914, and for February, 1915, show a constant improvement.

Actual numbers rather than percentages give a better idea of the effect of the depression. The estimated number of women in industry who were either unemployed or on short time was placed by the Board of Trade at nearly a million.¹

Unemployment was much more serious in some industries than in others. The trades most affected were cotton and furniture, the latter, an important London industry, depressed in part because furniture may be classed as a "luxury trade" easily affected by any general loss of confidence and in part because of a shortage of raw materials. The following figures, published by the Board of Trade, show the extent of the contraction of employment in these two industries in October, 1914.²

Furniture Contraction	Cotton Contraction
21.4 per cent among males	17.1 per cent among males
12.7 per cent among females	14.2 per cent among females

In addition to this definite unemployment, short time or "concealed unemployment" was a serious matter in both industries and was especially marked in the cotton trade, where it was estimated at from 42 to 45 per cent of the women employed.

The depression in the cotton industry was more serious because of the great numbers of working women involved and because the depression was long continued. The slow recovery in the industry and the magnitude of the problem of unemployment are shown in Table II, which gives the number of weavers unemployed or on short time from October, 1914, to October, 1915.³

War was not the sole cause of depression in the cotton trade. Bad times had been expected in Lancashire before the war broke out, but the bad condition of things was greatly aggravated by the

¹ Data as to the employment of women in industry in September, 1914, were as follows: "Still on full time," 1,203,750; "on overtime," 47,250; "on short time," 810,000; "contraction of numbers employed," 189,000. See Cd. 7703, p. 6.

²*Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ Data from the weekly returns of the Amalgamated Weavers' Association published in the *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 28.

war, since the cotton trade more than any other important industry was dependent on foreign markets and was particularly affected by the various obstacles that the war placed in the way of export. The industry was also affected to some extent by lack of materials, such as dyes and colors, formerly imported.

Although in some respects the general position of the woolen and worsted trades was like that of cotton, nevertheless these trades were quite different, in that they were relieved immediately by the placing of government contracts.

TABLE II

	Approximate Number of Weavers Un- employed	Approximate Number of Weavers on Short Time		Approximate Number of Weavers Un- employed	Approximate Number of Weavers on Short Time
1914			1915		
October 17.....	49,587	66,408	January 30.....	12,370	67,250
October 24.....	53,811	68,208	February 27.....	7,902	47,580
October 31.....	51,549	79,949	March 27.....	7,953	21,429
November 7....	46,333	89,905	April 24.....	6,344	14,094
November 14....	43,522	93,618	May 22.....	7,606	11,642
November 21....	48,387	88,524	June 26.....	7,721	8,934
November 28....	44,249	86,450	July 24.....	9,248	5,055
December 26....	26,383	71,450	August 14.....	4,396	2,945
			September 25....	16,586	4,944
			October 2.....	16,134	3,144

Table III¹ shows the percentage of unemployment in all the trades normally employing as many as 15,000 women.

This table shows at least a slight recovery in October for every trade except paper and printing and the boot and shoe trade, in which the contraction percentage had actually increased. In a number of cases the recovery was very marked. This was especially true in the woolen and worsted, hosiery and other textiles, clothing, leather (in which a contraction of 11.8 per cent had been changed to an increase of 2.0), engineering, and other metals—all trades in which the placing of orders for the outfitting of the "new army" and the production of war supplies for Great Britain and her allies had begun to take effect. The increased contraction in the boot and shoe trade indicates a lack of improvement in spite of government orders. This appears to have been due to the fact that the

¹ From Cd. 7703, p. 9.

boot and shoe contracts did not benefit the London industry, which was chiefly engaged in "light women's wares," and neither its machinery nor skilled labor could be to any extent employed for army work. In Leicester, also, the boot and shoe industry was specialized in women's work, and it was necessary to instal heavy machinery before army contracts could be undertaken.¹ The Board

TABLE III

STATE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1914,
COMPARED WITH JULY, 1914; NUMBER EMPLOYED IN JULY, 1900

TOTAL GROUPS	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OCCUPIED CENSUS, 1911	CONTRACTION OF EMPLOYMENT	
		Percentage September, 1914	Percentage October, 1914
Total, including miscellaneous trades.....	2,229,000	8.4	6.2
Cotton.....	388,000	14.9	14.2
Woolen and worsted.....	144,600	4.3	1.9
Linen, jute, and hemp.....	107,700	1.0	0.8
Hosiery.....	51,900	† 0.3	† 5.2
Other textile.....	167,100	7.3	2.7
Clothing.....	808,200	8.6	5.2
Boot and shoe.....	50,000	0.3	1.7
Other food, etc.*.....	99,000	13.6	12.1
Paper and printing.....	122,000	4.4	6.5
Furniture, etc.....	21,800	13.1	12.7
Glass, china, etc.....	34,600	5.3	4.8
Leather, canvas, etc.....	30,900	11.8	† 2.0
Engineering.....	15,700	0.5	† 2.2
Chemicals.....	34,100	1.1	1.0
Cutlery, wiredrawing, etc.....	22,600	1.4	0.6
Other metal.....	48,700	4.8	1.3

* Other food and tobacco trade includes bread, biscuit, cocoa, confectionery, and fruit-preserving trades; sugar and glucose, preserved-meat, pickle, sauce, and baking-powder trades; fish-curing trades; aerated waters, cider vinegar, British wine, etc.

† A † indicates the extent to which any industry has been compelled to draw in new employees.

of Trade report on the "state of employment" noted also in connection with the discussion of the effect of army contract work that the contracts given to the boot and shoe trade had affected adversely the box-making trade, a women's industry, because the boots and shoes required by the government do not need boxes; some firms were consequently at a standstill.

¹ See Cd. 7703, pp. 15 and 18.

But, although the improvement in trade conditions brought about a gradual diminution of unemployment, some public assistance was needed in the meantime for the hundreds of thousands of women who had been suddenly thrown out of work.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

The Central Committee on Women's Employment was appointed on August 20, 1914, by the Home Secretary, "to consider, and from time to time report upon, schemes for the provision of work for women and girls unemployed on account of the war." Among the fourteen members of the committee were five representatives of working women chosen by the War Emergency: Workers' National Committee; and the secretary of the committee was Miss Mary Macarthur, well known as the secretary for the Women's Trade Union League and as the chairman of the National Federation of Women Workers. It was expected, therefore, that the interests of the working women would be adequately protected in the work of this committee.

Some ill feeling had been aroused through the formation, immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, which was to supply articles for the troops by the volunteer work of leisure-class women. This plan met with vigorous opposition from the working women's organizations on the ground that the already serious unemployment among women would probably become worse if any national scheme were promoted to supplant paid workers by volunteers.

Opposition to this scheme also came from the newly formed War Emergency: Workers' National Committee. This organization grew out of a conference of representatives of labor organizations which was called August 5, 1914, "to consider the industrial and social position of the working classes as affected by the war." The executive committee included representatives of several well-known women's organizations, among these Miss Mary Macarthur (Women's Trade Union League), Miss Margaret Bondfield (Women's Co-operative Guild), Dr. Marion Phillips (Women's Labour League), and Miss Susan Lawrence (London County Council). This committee took a firm stand in opposition to the appeals which were

being sent out urging women to volunteer for work rendered necessary by the war when more than half a million women were out of employment, and their protests were quickly effective. On August 17 the following official announcement, which was given to the newspapers, indicated that the Queen Mary's Guild scheme had been modified in order to safeguard the interest of the women whose only asset was their labor power:

There has been evident misunderstanding concerning the aims of the Queen's Needlework Guild, some people feeling alarmed at the possibility that the enlistment of the voluntary aid of women workers would tend to restrict the employment of other women in dire need of paid work. Voluntary aid was meant to supplement and not to supplant paid labour, and one of the Queen's very first cares when the Guild appeal was decided upon was to avoid the infliction of any hardships. The matter has been under earnest consideration ever since, and the announcement that representatives of working women will be called into consultation provides a guarantee that everything possible will be done to safeguard the interests of women workers.¹

With public attention thus called to the suffering among unemployed women, particularly in London, the "Queen's Work for Women Fund" was started, and money was turned over to the Central Committee on Women's Employment to provide work or assistance in some form of work for women who were unemployed and destitute.

The work of the Central Committee² was divided into two quite distinct branches:

1. Relief work to provide for women who were unemployed on account of the war.
2. Work tending to diminish unemployment among women by "assisting the proper distribution of work available for women in ordinary industry" and by finding new employments for skilled women workers displaced owing to the war.

RELIEF WORK OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The committee decided that no plans for relief work should be accepted unless two important principles were observed: (1) the

¹ *The Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 80.

² See the *Interim Report of the Central Committee on Women's Employment*, 1915 (Cd. 7848).

product of relief workshops must not compete in any way with ordinary industry; (2) the work must be of such a nature as to maintain and, if possible, to improve the efficiency of the women employed. In the report of the committee's work it is made clear that the first point related to the method of distributing the output of the workroom rather than to the nature of the work. The necessity of avoiding competition, direct or indirect, with normal trade was emphasized; stress was laid, not only on the fact that the articles made should not be offered for sale, but also on the fact that they should not even be distributed free to persons with purchasing power. It is of interest to observe that the committee reported that difficulty had been experienced "in enforcing this principle, chiefly owing to the desire of the local committees to make articles for the troops."

With regard to the second point—that the work should be of educational value—the committee instructed the local committees that the object of combining relief with schemes of work was not merely to avoid the dangers which attend relief through doles, but also to afford an opportunity of maintaining or of definitely increasing the efficiency of the girls and women concerned.¹

The vexed question of the wages to be paid in the local workrooms was not easily disposed of. The minimum rate fixed was 3 pence an hour for women over eighteen, and 10 shillings as the maximum relief allowed in the form of wages or maintenance. The committee gave the following reasons for the adoption of this rate:

In determining the minimum rate for relief work the Committee did not intend to imply any expression of opinion as to what should or should not be regarded as a fair rate in ordinary economic undertakings. But it was necessary to have some regard to the rate normally paid to the majority of women with whom it would be necessary to deal. It was felt undesirable to fix wages either so high as to attract from ordinary employment or else so low as to fall below the barest subsistence level. The Committee had the difficult task of striking a fair mean between these two extremes. Many women workers are

¹ Thus the committee says that "work . . . which will tend to develop ingenuity and a certain amount of taste . . . is preferable to a merely mechanical production of stock articles; and especially with the work of teachable women it is worth while to be content with a smaller number of finished articles if the women can be induced to take a pride in their work" (Cd. 7848, p. 10).

normally in receipt of wages below a subsistence level, and in many trades a lower minimum than 3 pence an hour is paid. In other trades the recognized hourly rate is more than double this amount.

Due consideration was also given to the minimum rates laid down by the various trade boards. None of these rates apply to any of the work done in relief workrooms, but they may be taken roughly as an indication of the lines below which in the public interest wages under any circumstances should not be allowed to drop. In two small localized trades minimum rates of $2\frac{3}{4}$ pence an hour have been fixed, but the lowest minimum so far determined by a trade board for a trade of any magnitude had been 3 pence, which was fixed in the case of the paper-box trade board, and has also been proposed as a minimum for the food-preserving and sugar-confectionery trade. In the skilled trade of men's tailoring it is proposed to revise the original rate of $3\frac{1}{4}$ pence for women, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ pence has been fixed by the shirtmaking board.

The articles made in the workrooms were distributed free either through charitable organizations or directly through the local committees. The main work done was the making of various kinds of clothing. Maternity outfits were distributed through maternity centers and schools for mothers. Children's clothing was given to the school "Care Committees," and large parcels of clothing were used for Belgian refugees in England or on the Continent or were given for distribution among the destitute in the devastated regions of France.

OTHER WORK OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The relief work of the Central Committee on Women's Employment was much less important than the efforts made to get the unemployed women back into the regular labor market. In its *Interim Report* the committee states emphatically that throughout its operations its members have "realized that it is better that workers should be self-maintaining than dependent on relief, even when that relief is given in the form of work." As the committee saw it, there was a tremendous dislocation of industry with unprecedented slackness in one trade and an almost equivalent overpressure in other trades; and its problem was one of assisting in the transfer or adaptation of unemployed workers and firms to new and imperative national needs.

The work of the committee in this problem of readjustment was of two kinds: (1) assisting firms unused to government work to

undertake War Office contracts for the making of army clothing, khaki cloth, blankets, and hosiery; (2) taking army contracts directly and distributing the work to firms that were too small to obtain such contracts themselves.

A brief account of these two branches of the committee's work may be of interest. One of the first steps in the problem of readjustment was the discovery that in the men's clothing industry, in which there was a great deal of unemployment, very few of the wholesale clothing firms were accustomed to the making of army garments and that the existing models of army service dress presented so many technical difficulties that it was almost impossible for the inexperienced firms to undertake contracts for such clothing. The committee secured an interview at the War Office and suggested certain modifications in the regulation army dress, which were immediately approved. The result was that the manufacturing difficulties were removed, full employment in the tailoring trade began at once, and the Army Supply Department was also greatly benefited by the prompt fulfilment of orders.

In shirtmaking there was no such problem, but there was a great deal of unemployment because firms did not know how to secure War Office contracts. The *Interim Report* points out that "here, the function of the Committee, acting on reports from the Intelligence Department of the Local Government Board, or on information forwarded by local authorities, was to advise firms requiring work to apply to the War Office for a contract, or, alternatively, application was made on the firm's behalf." A typical instance of such action may be quoted:

A letter received in September from the Wiltshire County Council drew attention to the unemployment of certain shirt workers in the county, and on inquiry it appeared that other workers engaged in the London factories of the same firm were also without work. The firm was therefore interviewed, and being found capable of executing Government orders on a considerable scale, was brought to the notice of the War Office, on whose contracts their workers, both in London and in the provinces, have since been continuously engaged.¹

Similar action was taken in behalf of the workers in certain other trades; and the problem of supplying khaki cloth, blankets, and

¹ *Interim Report* (Cd. 7848, p. 5).

various kinds of hosiery was greatly simplified by the work of the committee.

Immediate assistance in the form of work other than relief work was given in the form of an order placed by the Queen with the committee for 75,000 woollen body belts, to form part of the Queen's gift to the troops. The committee was able through this order to assist the carpet trade, which was greatly depressed on the outbreak of the war. The yarn for the belts was obtained from firms previously engaged in producing carpet yarn, and in the actual making of the belts employment was provided for a considerable number of women in Kidderminster, Belfast, and elsewhere.

An interesting example of the kind of readjustment that was brought about is that of a great London dressmaker who employed upward of one hundred women and whose business was entirely ruined by the war. This dressmaker asked to be given a contract to supply some of the belts for the Queen's gift, and a contract of £1,500 was given her. She purchased the necessary machinery and yarn and trained her staff for a new occupation. She carried out the contract successfully and has since been engaged on army hosiery contracts which keep her entire staff fully employed.

The part of the committee's work which meant the undertaking of contracts to be afterward sublet is also of interest. The committee wished to find some method of assisting the great number of firms engaged in dressmaking and other needlework trades that were so severely injured by the "panic economy" following the outbreak of the war that they were faced with the prospect of entirely giving up their businesses. These firms were in general too small or were possessed of too little equipment and experience to make War Office contracts themselves. But it was possible to obtain work for them if a central body should take action on their behalf. The Central Committee on Women's Employment therefore undertook the contracts and arranged also to supply expert advice, to pay promptly for the work done, and to undertake such services and such processes of manufacture as the firms were unable economically to provide for themselves. With these objects in view the committee undertook the following contracts:

a) Twenty thousand army shirts which had been cut out by the Army Clothing Department to be made up. These were

distributed to a large number of firms having from two or three up to a hundred employees, and the committee afterward collected, examined, and returned the made-up shirts to the Royal Army Clothing Department. So inexperienced were the firms employed on this contract that in some cases 50 per cent of the shirts made had to be corrected before they could be sent to the government, but the standard of work improved rapidly under the direction of the expert supervisors employed by the committee.

b) Ten thousand shirts a week to be supplied after the order given above had been completed. The Army Clothing Department was no longer able to do the cutting out of the shirts, and it therefore became necessary for the committee to open a shirt-cutting work-room. This meant employment for a staff of experienced cutters, and the Shirt and Jacket Cutters' Union allowed their general secretary to become foreman cutter and supplied some of their members to work under him. Unemployed girls were engaged for the business of packing the cut-out shirts and dispatching them to the dressmaking and similar establishments where they were to be made up.

c) Other contracts included: (1) 105,000 flannel belts, which could be easily executed and were eagerly undertaken by firms engaged in any kind of needlework; and (2) 2,000,000 pairs of army socks. By means of this contract an attempt was made to assist the employees of the high-grade dressmaking firms for which there was no outlook except a continued depression of trade. It was believed that "woolen garments of simple character could, when ordered in considerable quantities," be produced by such firms. The committee undertook to supply hand knitting machines on loan, the cost to be deducted from the price for the completed articles.

Before the first of February, 1915, the committee had laid out nearly £12,600 in this work, and practically the entire sum was paid in the form of workers' wages or wages for skilled supervisors or managers.

Other branches of work undertaken by the committee are less interesting. Attention was given to the possibility of promoting new trades. The danger of starting new enterprises on unsound lines was clearly understood, and any financial help given by the

committee toward the starting of new trades was merely in the form of advances for the payment of wages for a limited period and with the assurance that the scheme was to be managed on sound commercial lines. There was, of course, much public interest shown in the possibility of establishing in Great Britain the manufacture of articles that had been imported from Germany before the war, but the committee was rightly cautious in making experiments in this direction. "Attempts to start new enterprises on unsound lines are invariably dangerous," according to its report, "and at abnormal times they may cause serious mischief by temporarily diverting custom from usual channels and thus accentuating the dislocation of industry."

THE APPEAL TO WOMEN TO REGISTER FOR WAR WORK

Although the employment situation was greatly improved by the spring of 1915, there were thousands of unemployed women still registered for work at the Labour Exchanges when the government issued an appeal urging all women who were "prepared, if needed, to accept paid work of any kind—industrial, agricultural, clerical, etc.—to enter themselves upon the Register of Women for War Service." "The object," it was said, "is to find out what reserve force of women's labor, trained or untrained, can be available if required." Within a fortnight 33,000 women enrolled; and although 110,714 women had registered by the middle of September, employment had been found for only 5,511 of them. The whole proceeding was somewhat farcical; and it aroused a great deal of opposition among the labor groups, who held that it represented an attempt to recruit low-paid labor.

Protest against this war-registry call, for example, was expressed by the "War Emergency: Workers' National Committee" on March 18 in the form of the following resolution:

That the Workers' National Committee has had under serious consideration the circular "War Service for Women," issued by the Board of Trade. The Committee points out that there are still 60,000 men and boys and 40,000 women and girls on the live register of the Labour Exchanges for whom the Board of Trade has so far failed to find situations or provide training whilst many thousands more are working short time. It further points out that the object of the circular appears to be specially directed to obtain women's labour

in agriculture and that absolutely no safeguards are proposed to guarantee good conditions and fair wages. The Committee is strongly of opinion that in drafting women into any industries care must be taken to prevent the stereotyping of bad conditions and low wages or to endanger standard conditions where they obtain; that this should be secured by a tribunal representative of the organized wage-earners—men and women—and that further efforts should be made to find situations for those persons now on the register before taking steps to bring in fresh supplies of female labour.¹

Further evidence of the way in which the women's war-service scheme was received by the public is found in an interesting manifesto issued by the Women's Freedom League, a suffragist society:

The Women's Freedom League are glad to note the tardy recognition by the Government of the value of women's work brought before the country in their scheme of war service for women. We demand from the Government, however, certain guarantees.

Firstly, that no trained woman employed in men's work be given less pay than that given to men.

Secondly, that some consideration be given when the war is over to the women who during the war have carried on this necessary work.

Thirdly, that in case of training being required proper maintenance be given to the woman or girl while that training is going on.

Recognizing that the Government's scheme offers a splendid opportunity for raising the status of women in industry, we urge that every woman should now resolutely refuse to undertake any branch of work except for equal wages with men. By accepting less than this women would be showing themselves disloyal to one another, and to the men who are serving their country in the field. These men should be certainly safeguarded on their return from any undercutting by women. Finally, seeing that the Government are now making a direct appeal to women to come forward and help in the defence of their country and that fresh responsibilities are being thrust upon them—thousands through the loss of their husbands being left to perform the duties of both father and mother—we feel that this is an opportune moment for the Government to guarantee that before they leave office they will bring before the House of Commons a measure for the political enfranchisement of women. We urge all suffragists to support us in this demand now.²

Opposition to the "War Registry for Women" was persistent and vociferous. The feeling was general that there was back of it a desire to get cheap labor for the farmers, who were making large profits at the time and were able to pay proper wages for work on the land. As a matter of fact, a shortage of skilled labor was

¹ *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 82.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

becoming apparent, and the thousands of unemployed women on the Labour Exchange registries were too unskilled to meet the need. Unfortunately this was also true of the hundred thousand women who signed the war-service register.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVIVAL AND THE EXTENSION OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

It is of course now well known that the period of depression in England that followed the outbreak of the war gradually disappeared as industry adapted itself to new demands, and that early in the year 1915 a shortage of labor rather than unemployment had become a matter of public concern. The revival took place most promptly in the industries in which the allied governments were placing contracts for the outfitting of the new armies and the production of war supplies, especially the leather, tailoring, metal trades, chemicals and explosives, food trades, hosiery, and the woolen and worsted industries. Industrial readjustment was still in process. There were trades, like dressmaking, in which there was still a considerable amount of unemployment, but there were other trades in which there was a shortage of women workers; and on the whole it was clear that further readjustments could be made with a little time.

Many dressmakers had of course definitely settled down to the making of army clothing as a new employment; but unemployment among all workers in the sewing trades was normally relieved by the usual seasonal activity that became noticeable in the early spring of 1915.

The *Labour Gazette* contained in February, 1915, numerous examples of the kind of readjustments that were constantly being made. Thus from Bath and Portsmouth it was reported that the employees of corset factories, who had been thrown out of work at the beginning of the war, were employed in making army knapsacks. From Walsall it was reported that the lighter and less skilled branches of the leather industry had absorbed dressmakers and other unemployed women. From the East Midlands a continued depression of the lace industry was reported, and the effort to draft the lace menders into the hosiery trade had failed because

they were found not to be adapted to the new work. It was hoped, however, that a new industry for the manufacture of tapes, braids, etc., for which lace workers were well adapted, would be started soon. In the tackle-making trade in Redditch, where there was a great deal of unemployment, girls from the hook departments were being absorbed in the manufacture of hosiery machine needles.

By April, 1915, the *Gazette* reported a shortage of female labor in some branches of the clothing trades, and in June, 1915, women were needed in excess of the available supply for many occupations. In July, 1915, the *Gazette* reported that "transference from one trade to another and the substitution of female for male labour are extending."

Early in the second year of the war the problem that had definitely shaped itself was how to extend the employment of women and meet the great shortage of skilled and unskilled labor.¹

A valuable summary of the situation at this time is to be found in a *Report on the Replacement of Men by Women in Industry* made to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in September of 1915.² After twelve months of war the three features of the labor market that were said to stand out in special prominence

¹ In November, 1915, the *Labour Gazette* reported that "everyone capable of work" was said to have an opportunity of employment. "It is evident that still larger numbers of women and girls, not previously employed in trade and industry, are required in many occupations where suitable work can be found for them." Again, in December, 1915, the *Gazette* contained the following statement: "In November the shortage of skilled and unskilled labour became still more marked. To some extent women have been used to make good the deficiency, but there is room for further developments in this direction during the war. The number of women ordinarily employed is not, however, sufficient to meet all the demands of the situation created by the withdrawal of so many men from their usual occupations and by the requirements of the Forces. A new supply of labour is therefore required, which, in the present circumstances, can only be drawn from among those women who have not hitherto been engaged in industry."

² British Association for the Advancement of Science, Manchester, 1915. Transactions of Section F (Economic Science and Statistics). *Interim Report of the Conference to Investigate into Outlets for Labour after the War. Report on the Replacement of Men by Women in Industry*, pp. 508 ff. A later study of this subject carried on for the British Association has recently been published under the title *Labour, Finance, and the War*, by Professor A. W. Kirkaldy. The chapter dealing with the subject of the replacement of men by women has been conveniently summarized in the *Monthly Review* of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, March, 1917, pp. 337-47.

were: (1) the serious shortage of skilled work people, (2) the considerable extension of women's employment, and (3) the limited extent to which women had replaced men, in the sense of doing work previously done by men.

This report emphasized the fact that valuable time had been lost through the popular belief that the war would be of short duration and through the failure to realize that experiments in the employment of women might have to be made on a considerable and unprecedented scale. The report noted that, although in a great many industries women were working in processes wholly or partially done by men, the extent to which this was being done was inconsiderable. It was added, however, that the margin of difference "between the actual fact and possibility is yet to be discovered."

The report showed that trades in industry proper in which the extension of women's employment had been most marked were engineering, chemical trades (explosives), leather work, tailoring, meat-preserving, grain-milling, basket-(shell)making, elastic webbing, scientific-instrument making, brushmaking, electrical engineering, canvas sack- and net-making, leather-tanning, rubber work, hosiery, hardware, wiredrawing, tobacco, boot and shoe trade, shirtmaking, wool and worsted, silk and jute trade. It appeared, however, that only a small proportion of the extra women employed in these trades were doing men's work. The fact that fewer men and many more women were employed had led to the belief that women were replacing men, but the report showed that this was actually happening only "in special instances and to a limited degree." As a matter of fact, the war demand had to a large extent been for goods in which a larger proportion of women than men were normally employed. For example, army clothing is of the kind made "in the medium branches of the trade in which female labour normally predominates. This part of the trade has drawn women and girls from its other branches and from its fringe of casual labour as well as from other trades in which there is a surplus of female labour." The high-class custom branch of the tailoring industry which employs men almost entirely had been greatly depressed since the outbreak of the war; and the great increase

in the number of women in the tailoring trade was not for work that had formerly been "men's work," but for an unusual expansion in the women's branch of the trade. Similarly, the report shows that the cloth for the making of uniforms was not the finest suiting on which a proportionately high number of men had been employed; and the war demands on the woollen and worsted trade had again been in those branches in which a larger number of women than men are employed under normal conditions.¹

That the old lines of demarcation between men's work and women's work were passing was clear, however, in many places. Although women were not undertaking highly skilled jobs, they were said to be gradually finding their way into processes "which were previously thought just above the line of their strength and skill. This is seen particularly in leather, engineering, and the wool and worsted trade, and also in trades which, though depressed during the war, have yet experienced a shortage of certain forms of labour, e.g., pottery, cotton, and the printing trades. This shifting line of demarcation between men's and women's jobs has in many cases received trade-union opposition, though in most cases agreements have been made for the duration of the war only and without prejudice to the consideration of the question after the war."

Since the preparation of the report of the British Association there appears to have been a great acceleration of the movement toward the replacement of men by women in occupations not customarily entered by women before the war.

An official appeal to employers signed by the Home Secretary and by the President of the Board of Trade was published in the *Labour Gazette* as early as March, 1916, calling attention to the great importance of maintaining the manufacturing industries of the country in full vigor. The appeal comments on the complaints of the shortage of labor and continues as follows:

There is one source and one only from which the shortage can be made good—that is, the great body of women who are at present unoccupied or engaged only in work not of an essential character. Many of these women have worked in factories and have already had industrial training—they form an asset of immense importance to the country at the present time, and every

¹ *Report on the Replacement of Men by Women in Industry*, p. 510.

effort must be made to induce those who are able to come to the assistance of the country in this crisis. Previous training, however, is not essential; since the outbreak of war women have given ample proof of their ability to fill up the gaps in the ranks of industry and to undertake work hitherto regarded as men's.

Every employer is appealed to, not to diminish productivity, but to make every possible effort to maintain his production by using women, whether in direct substitution for the men who have been withdrawn or by some subdivision or rearrangement of his work.

TABLE IV

INDUSTRIAL OCCUPATIONS	PERCENTAGE OF FIRMS REPORTING SHORTAGE OF FEMALE LABOUR		INCREASE OR DE- CREASE IN THE NUM- BER OF WOMEN EMPLOYED, COM- PARED WITH JULY, 1914
	July, 1916	October, 1916	
Metal trades.....	5	5	+ 227,000
Chemical trades.....	2	3	+ 38,000
Textile trades.....	38	40	+ 33,000
Clothing trades.....	20	21	- 12,000
Food trades.....	6	7	+ 42,000
Paper and printing.....	17	10	- 5,000
Wood trades.....	4	8	+ 16,000
All industrial firms making re- turns, including some in occu- pations not specified above ..	9	10	+ 393,000

Statistics published in the *Labour Gazette* show curiously enough that in the summer and autumn of 1916 the shortage of women's labor was most general in the clothing and textile industries, which are regarded as the typical women's trades. Table IV shows the percentage of firms in different industries reporting a shortage of female labor. The table was based on the answers obtained through replies made by employers as to whether they were able to obtain all the women employees they desired, and it is explained that a "shortage" was frequently reported when skilled workers were needed and only unskilled or inexperienced women were available.¹

This table indicates that an interesting movement had been in progress transferring the supply of women's labor from the old

¹ See *Labour Gazette*, January, 1917.

traditional women's trades to the munitions industries and other trades in which higher earnings are probably available during the war. In the clothing trades as a whole there has been a decline in the demand for labor during the war period; but the supply has evidently, by transference to better-paid work, decreased more than the demand.

The extent to which women's labor had been utilized for "men's work" and the need for a still greater extension of women's employment was presented officially by the War Office by the issuing of an illustrated octavo volume in September, 1916, entitled *Women's War Work*. The book was issued, in the words of the preface, because it was believed that a more widespread knowledge of the success which had been attained by women in nearly all branches of men's work was most desirable and would lead to the release to the colors of large numbers of men who had hitherto been considered indispensable.

A further extract from the preface is of interest:

Employers who have met the new conditions with patience and foresight readily admit that the results achieved by the temporary employment of Women far exceed their original estimates, and even so are capable of much further extension. If this is true in their case, how much greater must be the scope for such substitution by those Employers who have not attempted it from reasons of apprehension or possibly prejudice? The necessity of replacing wastage in our Armies will eventually compel the release of all men who can be replaced by women, and it is therefore in the interests of Employers to secure and train temporary substitutes as early as possible, in order to avoid any falling off in production.

The organized official attempt to replace male by female labor is still going on, and the Board of Trade has now in process of publication a series of pamphlets setting forth the methods of utilizing women's labor in the various trades.¹

EXTENSION OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE MUNITION TRADES

The largest and most spectacular extension of women's employment has been in the engineering and allied trades engaged in the production of munitions of war. As early as February, 1915, a special committee was created, with Sir George Askwith, of the

¹ See the *Labour Gazette*, March and April, 1917.

Board of Trade, as chairman, to report on the steps that might be taken to make the productive power of the employees in engineering and shipbuilding establishments fully available to meet the needs of the nation in the war emergency. This committee presented a first interim report on February 16 and a second interim report on February 20. The latter report dealt with the production of shells and fuses and contained the following recommendation:

We are satisfied that, in the production of shells and fuses, there are numerous operations of a nature that can be, and are already in some shops, suitably performed by female labor. We therefore recommend that, in order to increase the output, there should be an extension of the practice of employing female labor on this work, under suitable and proper conditions.¹

A third interim report (March 4, 1915) dealt with "Demarcation of Work" and emphasized the urgent necessity of relaxing "existing demarcation restrictions" and the extension of the use of semi-skilled or unskilled labor when the necessary skilled labor could not be obtained.

Such data as are available show that a very considerable increase in the employment of women in the engineering trades had taken place even before the government undertook by special efforts to recruit women munition makers. Thus the estimate of the Board of Trade as to the change in the employment of women and men in engineering by February, 1915, is shown in Table V.

TABLE V

	Census Report of Numbers Employed in 1911 on "Engi- neering"	Percentage of Contraction or Expansion by February, 1915
Male.....	665,000	- 9.1
Female.....	21,000	+ 26.4

At the outset grave difficulties over the employment of women were created by the opposition of the skilled male workers to the use of unskilled labor. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities attempts were made to use women to tend the simpler machines, but these attempts were in many cases resisted by the men.² In

¹ *Labour Gazette*, March, 1915, p. 83.

² G. D. H. Cole, *Labour in War Time*, p. 242 ff.

spite of these objections, however, women had found employment in increasing numbers in these trades. Engineering proper had been almost exclusively a "men's trade" before the war. Women were first employed in the subsidiary branches, such as the manufacture of shells, in which they were employed as fillers; but they have gradually been employed in the engineering workshops, where they have worked by the side of the men operatives.

The employment of women in the munitions trades was greatly facilitated by the so-called "Treasury agreement" of March 19, 1915, relating to the trade-union rules that restricted the employment of unskilled labor. Reference has already been made to the recommendation of Sir George Askwith's committee as to the relaxation of "demarcation restrictions," but it was necessary to obtain the consent of the trade unions before this could be done. The "Treasury Conference" between the representatives of the chief trade unions in industries producing commodities for the war and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade was called to consider the steps to be taken with reference to the "urgent need of the country for the large, and a larger, increase in the output of munitions of war."

In response to the appeal to relax trade-union rules, the officials of all the unions present, except the Amalgamated Society of Engineers,¹ agreed to a series of proposals, one of which, with certain provisos, was as follows:

. . . . The workmen's representatives at the conference are of opinion that during the war period the relaxation of the present trade practices is imperative, and that each union be recommended to take into favourable consideration such changes in working conditions or trade customs as may be necessary with a view to accelerating the output of war munitions or equipments.

Among the conditions accompanying this agreement was the following provision relating to the employment of women:

The relaxation of existing demarcation restrictions or admission of semi-skilled or female labour shall not affect adversely the rates customarily paid for the job. In cases where men who ordinarily do the work are adversely affected thereby, the necessary readjustments shall be made so that they can maintain their previous earnings.

¹ These proposals were also agreed to by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers when certain additional safeguards had been assured; see the *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 61.

The rapid increase of women workers in the munitions trades was hastened, not only by this "Treasury agreement," but by the public feeling aroused by the battle of Neuve Chapelle and the creation of a special ministry of munitions. Mr. Lloyd George said the "cause of English freedom" had made it imperative that trade-union regulations be modified, especially those regulations that restricted the use of unskilled labor and the employment of women.¹

The Ministry of Munitions issued in February, 1916, a profusely illustrated volume entitled *Notes on the Employment of Women on Munitions of War with an Appendix on the Training of Munition Workers*. The purpose of the volume is described by Mr. Lloyd George in his preface as an attempt to assist in the process of "diluting" skilled labor in munition factories. "The photographic records and the written descriptions of what is actually being done by women in munition factories on processes hitherto performed solely by skilled men will, I believe," wrote Mr. Lloyd George, "act as an incentive and a guide in many factories where employers and employed have been sceptical as to the possibilities of the policy of dilution." Mr. Lloyd George's "picture book,"² as some of the working women called it, is interesting because it discusses the question of how far the women were able to do the same work that

¹ *Annual Register*, 1915, p. III.

² The working woman's point of view is indicated in the following editorial from the *Woman Worker*, March, 1916, p. 4:

"Our women munition makers ought to be proud! Mr. Lloyd George has brought out a picture book about them! It is a large, handsome book, costing 1s., entirely full of pictures of women workers and all the processes they can do. According to Mr. Lloyd George, never were there such useful workers as women munition workers. He says they can do brazing and soldering, they can make 8-in. H.E. shells, they can drill 8-pounder shells, and some of them are very successful in making high explosive shells.

"Well, it is very nice to be praised by so important a man, and it is even nicer that he should take the trouble to have a book filled with pictures of the girls at work. We women, however, have always had in our mind a lurking suspicion that we were, after all, almost as clever as the men, and it is pleasant enough to hear Mr. Lloyd George say so. But there is a conclusion to be drawn from all this. If girls are as important and as clever as the men, then they are as valuable to the employer. If this is so it becomes a duty of the girls to see now and always, whether on Government work or not, that they receive the same pay as the men. Otherwise, all their cleverness and their intelligence go to helping the employer and bringing down the wages of their husbands, fathers, and brothers."

had been done by men, and the methods that had been adopted to make certain occupations more suitable for women. Slight modifications in many processes are reported. Thus, for the making of what are called "18-pounder high-explosive shells," it states:

Only one change has been made in the machines to suit the women. At first the shell blanks were dropped into a round jig, and owing to the speed of drilling the blank was frequently wedged in the chuck after the drilling was completed. To avoid the heavy work of forcing the shell out of the chuck, a new type, designed by the drilling-machine maker, was fitted. . . . One male supervisor (an unskilled workman) is provided for each eight machines, and the blanks are brought up to the machines in trucks designed for the purpose. . . . It is advisable to provide (the women) with waterproof aprons, and to arrange that between each machine is a raised wooden platform, so that both the feet and dress of the operator are kept dry (p. 7).

Again:

There has been, and still is, some difference of opinion amongst engineers as to the employment of women on shells of 6-inch calibre and upwards. . . . The experience of those employing woman labour on large shell bodies is that the actual cutting operations demand no greater strain from the operator than do those on smaller shell, but that the lifting in and out is the all-important factor in the operations on heavy shell.

Owing to the fact that women have only recently been employed on the heavier shells, some factories are using, temporarily, lifting devices which are obviously capable of considerable improvement. Illustrated is a case where an ordinary block swung on a small jib attached to the lathe is proving quite satisfactory. It is obvious, however, that fairly elaborate lifting devices are essential for efficient operation and constitute a deciding factor in the employment of women on heavy projectiles (p. 17).

However, leaving the subject of shell bodies, difficulties in the utilization of women's labor are pointed out:

The question of the dilution of skilled male labour by women in general munition shops is admittedly a more difficult problem than that dealt with in the previous section. In projectile work and other operations in which the pieces are manufactured in tens of thousands and for which entirely special lathes and machines are designed, super-specialization and subdivision of operations render woman's work comparatively easy to organize. In the general machine shop, however, where pieces of work are dealt with in numbers of ten and twenty, no such special "fool-proof" devices or limitations of the number of operations per machine can be organized (p. 21).

For "shell-fuses" woman labor was recommended as entirely suitable. "The majority of successful fuse-making factories are, as regards the operation of machinery, staffed entirely by women" (p. 63).

In spite of all that has been done to increase the staff of women munition workers, the movement is still going on, and there are signs that it must go still farther. A significant article in the *London Times*¹ recently reproached the engineers and the Ministry of Munitions because the substitution of women had not gone far enough. The engineers were told that their interest and their duty alike demanded that the employment of women should be extended without delay. The Ministry of Munitions was reproached because, though it had "given an overwhelming demonstration of the ability of women to replace men with success on practically any single class of operations involved in the manufacture of munitions," yet in the engineering industries, as the *Times* complained, only a fraction of what had been proved to be possible had actually been done in the replacement of men by women. The ministry was reproached for having acted timidly: "The suspension during the war of all restrictions on output having been first agreed with the trade unions and then passed into law, the Ministry, instead of securing that these restrictions were in fact removed, proceeded to debate them 'from town to town, from lodge to lodge, and from works to works.'"

The question of the extent to which women are employed is, however, less important than the effect of their employment (1) upon the rate of wages and the principle of "equal pay for equal work," and (2) upon the health of the women employed.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF TRADE UNIONS ON WOMEN'S WORK

Leaders among the trade-union women in England were prompt to foresee grave dangers from the increase in the industrial demand for women's labor unless the women could be organized and their interests safeguarded. Much of the new labor coming into the munitions industry is probably only temporary. Between 1901 and 1911 the statistics of occupations in the English census showed

¹ See the *Times*, weekly edition, May 4, 1917.

that the proportion of women to men in industry had changed very little in the decade. Census statistics, however, indicated that the proportion of younger women to older women had increased. This withdrawal of women from industry, upon marriage, had created a reserve of woman's labor which has been called into service again since the war and which will probably retire again after the war¹. Trade unionists, both men and women, were quick to foresee the difficulties in the way of organizing these women who looked upon themselves as in the labor market only temporarily. The War Emergency: Workers' National Committee called a national conference on April 17, 1915, of trade unions that had women members and of the special women's labor organizations. The following resolution submitted to the Conference by Miss Bondfield, of the National Federation of Women Workers, shows how clearly the intelligent members of the labor group understood the problems which they were facing. The resolution as passed by the Conference is as follows:

That this conference, representing the women's Trade Union, Labour, Socialist, co-operative, suffrage, and kindred organisations, declares that, as it is imperative in the interests of the highest patriotism that no emergency action should be allowed unnecessarily to depress the standard of living of the workers or the standard of working conditions, adequate safeguards must be laid down for any necessary transference or substitution of labour, and it therefore urges:

a) That all women who register for war service should immediately join the appropriate Trade Union for which they are volunteering service, and that membership of such organisation should be the condition of employment for war service.

b) That where a woman is doing the same work as a man she should receive the same rate of pay, and that the principle of equal pay for equal work should be rigidly maintained.

c) That in no case should any woman be drafted from the war register to employment at less than an adequate living wage, and that the stereotyping of sweated conditions must at all costs be avoided.

d) That adequate training, with maintenance, should be provided for suitable women whom it is proposed to place in employment under the foregoing conditions, and that in choosing candidates for such training preference should be given, where suitability is equal, to the normal woman wage-earner now unemployed.

¹ See Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-48.

e) That in any readjustment of staffs which may have to be effected after the war priority of employment shall be given to workmen whose places have been filled by women.

f) That the women who are displaced in this way shall be guaranteed employment.

An immediately urgent question of vital importance to all working men and women was the problem of organizing the new women workers who were coming to be in such demand in the army-contract trades. In particular the presence of large numbers of women in the munitions trades was likely to lead to serious consequences unless they could be promptly organized. It was suggested that they should join the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, to which the men in the same industries belonged. In June, 1915, however, the Society refused to admit women, and instead recommended that the women should be organized by the National Federation of Women Workers.¹ Their refusal to admit women was based on the theory that the women are not permanent members of the trade and that the "dilution" policy is only a temporary one. The Federation seems to have been most successful, not only in organizing the women munition makers, but also in protecting their interests before the Munitions Tribunals.

THE DEMAND FOR A MINIMUM WAGE FOR WOMEN IN THE MUNITION INDUSTRIES

A new series of Treasury conferences held in June, 1915, led to some new proposals that were ratified by the representatives of the workers in munition industries and later passed into law as the "Munitions of War Act" (June 23, 1915). This act adversely affected the women employed in munitions factories by making it illegal for anyone employed on munitions work to leave work or to change from one employment to another, even if one employer

¹ The National Federation of Women Workers is an interesting organization formed to assist in organizing women in trades where men's unions do not exist or are unwilling to admit women members. The Federation had in 1916 a membership of 20,000 women organized in local branches and as far as possible according to trades. The Federation membership includes ammunition, tin-box, and confectionery workers, shirtmakers, silk and thread weavers, bolt and lock, hollow-ware and chain-makers, laundry workers, charwomen, and dressmakers.

should offer higher wages or better conditions of work, without a certificate granted by the first employer.¹

The National Federation of Women Workers promptly urged that if its members were "to be tied by the state to one employment, the state must see that the conditions of that employment are such as to protect the health and efficiency of the worker, and the wages must be sufficient to maintain her in decency and comfort."² The hardships experienced in individual cases were very great. Thus the *Woman Worker* tells of a girl munition worker earning only 12 shillings a week who was refused a leaving certificate when she had a chance to earn 20 shillings a week at similar work for another employer.

It is impossible within the limits of this article to discuss the questions relating to women's wages that have arisen in connection with the extension of women's employment during the war.³ In the munitions industries particularly the wage question has been acute because of the emphasis on the principle of "equal pay for equal work" and of the general feeling that a proper minimum wage ought to be guaranteed by the state.

A Manchester "Women's War Interests Committee" had undertaken an investigation of the payment of women munition workers, and found that the standard was 12 or 15 shillings a week in munition establishments in contrast to the 20 shillings, which was the standard or usual women's rate in the district.⁴ The committee thereupon began to work for a guaranteed minimum of 20 shillings a week for all women in munition works.

¹ Munitions of War Act, 1915, sec. 7, provides: "A person shall not give employment to a workman, who has within the last previous six weeks, or such other period as may be provided by Order of the Minister of Munitions as respects any class of establishment, been employed on or in connection with munitions work in any establishment of a class to which the provisions of this section are applied by Order of the Minister of Munitions, unless he holds a certificate from the employer by whom he was last so employed that he left work with the consent of his employer or a certificate from the munitions tribunal that the consent has been unreasonably withheld."

² See Miss Mary Macarthur in the *Woman Worker*, January, 1916.

³ For an important discussion of this point, see the report of the Committee of the British Association, *op. cit.*, pp. 516-18, 528ff.; and see also a very valuable contribution in *Economic Journal*, March, 1917, "The Remuneration for Women's Work," by Councillor Eleanor Rathbone, of Liverpool.

⁴ B. L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry* (London, 1915), pp. 256, 296.

The agitation for "equal pay for equal work" and for a decent minimum wage for women munition workers had been growing since the time of the first Treasury agreement. This agreement had provided that the admission of "semi-skilled or female labour" should not "affect adversely the rates customarily paid for the job." This rather high-sounding statement was vague enough; and in reply to a question raised by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst as to exactly what was meant, Mr. Lloyd George replied:

DEAR MISS PANKHURST:

The words which you quote would guarantee that women undertaking the work of men would get the same piece-rates as men were receiving before the date of this agreement. That, of course, means that if the women turn out the same quantity of work as men employed on the same job, they will receive exactly the same pay.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) D. LLOYD GEORGE

March 26, 1915

That this statement was considered most unsatisfactory the following extract from Miss Pankhurst's reply indicates:

Many thanks for your letter with its valuable explanation that women are to receive the "same piece-work rates as men were receiving before the date of this agreement." I conclude that the women will also receive any war bonus and increase of wages as a result of the war which would have been paid had men been employed. It is important to know, also, whether the same time rates are to apply in the case of women as those which were paid to men; because if this were not the case, employers might merely engage women to work on time rates to avoid paying the standard rate to men.¹

In some of the large ammunition factories the low wages of women workers was not a new problem,² but one rendered more serious because of the vast numbers of women suddenly called into the trade and the new conditions of employment.

The attempt to secure minimum wages in this industry proceeded very slowly. Mr. Lloyd George was charged with giving

¹ See Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-41.

² Testifying before the Committee on Home Work in the summer of 1907, Miss Mary Macarthur referred to the large ammunition factories (cartridge-making) as furnishing illustrations of low and irregular rates of wages paid for women's unskilled labor in factories. See *Minutes of Evidence: Select Committee on Home Work* (H. of C. 280), testimony of Miss Mary Macarthur.

promises, but with failing to carry them out. In June, 1915, he had replied to an imposing women's demonstration by expressing his appreciation of the services of women. "Women's work was needed; the men had gone to the front; if the country was to be saved, women must come forward and help"; and he also said, "Wages should be fair. . . . There should be a fixed minimum." As a matter of fact, more than one minimum was involved—a minimum for women doing men's work and a minimum for women who were in work not recognized as men's work before the war.

The first minimum was forced by the men, but even this minimum was slow in coming. In October, 1915, an order, known as "Circular L 2," was drawn up by the Munitions Labour Supply Committee embodying most of the promises made earlier in the year to the men's unions, but this order was never actually effective. In January, 1916, one important firm complained "that they were the only firm in the United Kingdom that were paying wages in accordance with Mr. Lloyd George's circular." As a result of continued protests by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the National Federation of Women Workers, the Munitions of War Amendment act in January, 1916, gave the Minister of Munitions power to fix the wages of women employed on munitions work; and as a result of this power, orders were issued in February, 1916, by means of which the terms of Circular L 2 had the force of law.

Circular L 2, however, took care only of the women doing men's work. "What about the women who are doing important work not recognized as men's work?" asked the National Federation of Women Workers. "There are many more of these women; they are, generally speaking, much worse off; they are less able to protect themselves; and therefore this claim on the minister to fulfil his pledged word is even stronger than for the others." The Federation also pointed out that there was little excuse for delay, since the problem was a simple one. "There are none of the complications so well known in the Trade Boards of 'how much the employer can bear' and whether we shall 'ruin trade.' The employer," the Federation said, "is the country itself, the country whose real interest is that no worker should be crushed under her burden. The trade cannot be hurt. Unfortunately the demand

for instruments of war cannot slacken at present.”¹ Calling attention to the fact that cost of living had risen more than 30 per cent since the war, the Federation asked for 5 pence an hour which, making allowance for the increased cost of living, was said to be equivalent to the rate fixed by the Trade Boards before the war as the minimum wage for some of the notoriously sweated trades like tailoring and shirtmaking.

After a period of several months the Ministry of Munitions issued a new order “relating to the remuneration of women and girls on munition work of a class which prior to the war was not recognized as men’s work in districts where such work was customarily carried on.” The highest rate in this order was 4½ pence per hour, with the provision that women and girls in the danger zones were to be paid a half-penny an hour in addition to the foregoing rate and the further provision that “allowances for other processes which are dangerous or injurious to health will be decided on the merits of the case.”²

This order not only failed to meet the demands of the Federation but it was also a disappointment, in that it failed to cover all women engaged in munitions work or even in controlled factories. The new order, like the old, applied only to firms enumerated in a schedule which was not published with the order. The demand that the order apply to all women in establishments to which the Munitions act had been applied was urged by trade-union women as a reasonable one.

The National Federation of Women Workers has been very active in discovering and trying to remedy cases of sweated munitions work. The *Woman Worker* for February, 1916, for example, reported the case of a Scotch factory in which girls were employed in coremaking for grenade bombs. The girls were working five days from six in the morning to eight in the evening without any overtime allowance, and on Saturdays from six in the morning to five in the evening, Sundays from six in the morning to six in the evening; a net working week, after deducting meal times, of 82

¹ See *Woman Worker*, April, 1916.

² See the *Labour Gazette*, December, 1916, and see also an earlier order in the *Gazette*, November, 1916.

hours, the total earnings working out at 16 shillings and 8 pence, or something under $2\frac{1}{2}$ pence per hour. The night shift was working from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. without any extra allowance for night work. The Federation has undoubtedly rendered a great public service in working to improve the wages and working conditions in such factories, but there remains ground of complaint that the government has not seen fit to take the whole matter of wages for war work under its direct control.

CLEARANCE PAPERS—THE MUNITIONS TRIBUNALS

Obviously the "leaving certificate" clauses of the Munitions act might easily be a serious means of oppression to the women employed. There appears to have been from the beginning feeling against them among the workers on the ground that they were an irritating and unnecessary hardship, since the Defence of the Realm act had made it illegal for employers to incite munition workers to change their employment.¹ A concession to the Federation of Women Workers in the Munitions Amending act was the appointment of women assessors on all Munitions Tribunals where women's cases were concerned. The need for women assessors was illustrated by a scandalous case in which three girls who had left their employment because of gross insult had to appear before a court of men to ask for the leaving certificate which their employer had withheld. An additional hardship in this case was that, although the employer was found to have unreasonably withheld their certificate, the court could not compel him to repay the girls the wages they had lost and the expenses of attending the court. It

¹ The *Woman Worker* published (February, 1916) the following statement of cases heard before the Munitions Tribunals up to November 27, 1915, as explaining in some measure their unpopularity.

	Cases	Defendants	Convicted	Fines		
Against workmen:				£	s.	d.
Strike Prosecutions.....	22	589	407	583	1	0
Breaches of Rules.....	786	3,074	2,012	1,649	17	6
Miscellaneous.....	6	9	4	3	10	0
Totals.....	814	3,672	2,423	2,236	8	6
Against employers:						
Lockouts.....	1	1
Illegal Employment.....	72	80	55	289	14	6
Miscellaneous.....	13	13	1	1	0	0
Totals.....	86	94	56	290	14	6

should be added that the Munitions Amending act also provided for the recovery of costs and expenses.

A few summaries of cases have been selected from among those published in the *Woman Worker* as illustrating the problems involved in the enforcement of the Munitions act. The first case illustrates the difficulty of determining which industries come under the act. A great deal of misunderstanding existed among working women as to the scope of the act. Many workers seemed to believe that no woman employed on government work could leave her employment without "clearance papers." Thus the *Woman Worker* repeats in more than one number the warning that employers cannot hold women employees for clearance cards except when they are working in engineering, arms and ammunition, and shipbuilding trades. "Any other worker," the girls are clearly warned, "can leave her employer as she likes and get a new job." The story is told of a shirtmaker in Woolwich who insisted even to representatives of the Labour Exchange that his girls could not leave him to go elsewhere without clearance papers, and similar cases were reported from other parts of the country.¹ A case which came before one of the Munitions Tribunals also illustrates the misunderstanding on this point:

Evie Mayne, aged 16, asked for a clearance card. It was stated in evidence by the firm that their business consisted in manufacturing a composition of mica and shellac known as micamite. This was used for insulating purposes in dynamos and other electric work. They supplied the Admiralty. The Court decided that the firm were manufacturers and not engineers, and that the girls employed did not need clearance cards.

Other difficulties in connection with the use of clearance papers and the importance of having a working woman's representative present at the sessions of the Munitions Tribunals are illustrated by the following cases reported by the *Woman Worker*.²

The Munitions act and low wages.—Lilian Hayhoe, a worker at Messrs. Eley's, Edmonton, applied for a clearance card. She had asked the firm for a clearance card on February 5th, but had been refused. Miss Susan Lawrence appeared to represent the Federation. Miss Hayhoe's case was that she was not earning sufficient wages. It was stated in Court that she was on piece, and had received 10s. for the week previous to February 5th. She made on an

¹ See the *Woman Worker*, March, 1916.

² *Woman Worker*, April and May numbers, 1916.

average 13s., and had earned 15s. with Sunday work. Three weeks' pay notes were produced, showing that her earnings for the weeks in question had been 13s. 7½d., 9s. 11½d., and 11s. 3d. She paid 2s. weekly in fares. The Court granted the clearance paper.

Ill-health as a cause of leaving.—At the sitting of the Metropolitan Munitions Court on March 16th the Organizing Secretary of the Federation of Women Workers was called as the woman assessor. The case before the Court was a clerk employed at Messrs. Siemen Bros., who claimed a leaving certificate on the ground of health. She was employed as foreman's clerk in a glass box in the middle of about three hundred machines, mainly drilling and capstans. She complained of the smell of oil. She suffered from severe headaches and had been off sick ten days. The firm refused the certificate on the ground that the real reason was her desire to get higher wages elsewhere. The Chairman and the assessors had difficulty in agreeing. Eventually the certificate was granted by "a majority of the Court."

Discharge without notice.—An interesting claim was heard in Manchester before the Local Munitions Tribunal, upon which Mrs. C. Pearson (District Organizer of the National Federation of Women Workers), one of the first women assessors, sat as an adjudicator. The claimants were three girls who were engaged in a munitions factory, and were discharged without notice or payment in lieu of notice. They were earning an average wage, with overtime, of 19s. per week. The employer dismissed the girls, owing to a Government contract running out; but the girls claimed that they were entitled to a week's money in lieu of notice, under Section 5, Sub-Section 3, of the Munitions of War Amendment Act. The President, in summing up, said that although the employer's contract with the Government had run out, there was also a contract with the employees which had to be fulfilled, and accordingly the employers were ordered to pay the girls a week's wages of 19s. each.

Unemployment and clearance papers.—In the Liverpool Munitions Court six women employed by Messrs. Buchanan & Sons summoned the firm for refusing them leaving certificates. The firm had no work to give them, but would not grant leaving certificates because "the lack of work might cease any day, and it would be a serious thing if they were short of forty or fifty girls." "It was, we suppose," commented the *Woman Worker*, "not serious, a mere laughing matter, for the girls to be short of wages for an indefinite time." The certificates were granted by the Munitions Court.

HEALTH OF MUNITION WORKERS

Closely related to the question of wages is the question of the health of women employed in the new occupations. The British Ministry of Munitions has rendered a great service to working women all over the industrial world in the work of its Committee on the Health of Munion Workers. This committee, with

Sir George Newman, the well-known medical officer of the Board of Education, as chairman, was appointed in September, 1915, "to consider and advise on questions of industrial fatigue, hours of labor, and other matters affecting the personal health and physical efficiency of workers in munition factories." It is unnecessary to attempt to summarize here the valuable memoranda¹ which have already been issued by the committee, since these reports are fortunately being reprinted as bulletins of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and will soon be easily available.² The reports deal with the health of men as well as of women workers, but the committee has issued one special memorandum on the employment of women³ in munition works, dealing with the health and industrial output of women as affected by night work, hours of work, overtime, rest pauses, and the provision of meals, sanitary conditions, physical condition of women workers, and questions of management and supervision. The report is of great interest to us in the United States, not merely because it contains an authoritative statement on the harmful effects of long hours and night work, but also because it shows how far we have lagged behind Great Britain in providing adequate protective measures for working women in time of peace. We can take no such backward step as was taken in England in the suspension of the Factory acts because we have not secured to the women workers in America such protection from overwork as England provided in the first half of the last century. That is, we cannot go backward where we have never gone forward.

As a matter of fact, there was no wholesale suspension of the Factory acts in England, even when the pressure for the production of supplies was greatest. Suspension or alteration of the provisions of the Factory acts is granted to employers after application to the

¹ The titles of these memoranda are as follows: "Sunday Labour"; "Welfare Supervision"; "Industrial Canteens"; "Employment of Women"; "Hours of Work"; "Canteen Construction and Equipment" (Appendix to No. 3); "Industrial Fatigue and Its Causes"; "Special Industrial Diseases"; "Ventilation and Lighting of Munition Factories and Workshops"; "Sickness and Injury"; "Statistical Information concerning Output in Relation to Hours of Work"; "Juvenile Employment."

² To be published as *Bulletins* 221, 222, and 223 of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³ Health of Munition Workers' Committee, *Memorandum No. 4*, "Employment of Women" (Cd. 8185).

Home Office, which considers the merits of each case and issues orders accordingly. Very considerable relaxations of the requirements as to hours of labor and night work for women were allowed and the Committee on the Health of Munition Workers has reported on the serious effects of these relaxations.

Recalling that in Illinois, one of our largest industrial states, the working women have never yet been able to secure the passage of a bill preventing night work, the following statement of the committee should be of special interest:

The imperative necessity of war has revived, after almost a century of disuse, the night employment of women in factories it was banished by international agreement from the twelve European countries which signed the Convention drawn up at the International Conference held at Berne. . . . The agreement was based upon the results of inquiries into the effects, economical, physical, and moral, of night work for women. The reports showed deterioration in health caused by the difficulty of securing sufficient rest by day; disturbance of home life, with its injurious effects upon the children; and diminished value of the work done—the common experience being that night work was inferior to day work. Now once more all these half-forgotten facts are in evidence in the Munition Factories. In a working-class home the difficulty in obtaining rest by day is great; quiet cannot be easily secured; and the mother of a family cannot sleep while the claims of children and home are pressing upon her; the younger unmarried women are tempted to take the daylight hours for amusement or shopping; moreover, sleep is often interrupted in order that the mid-day meal may be shared. The employment of women at night is, without question, undesirable, yet now it is for a time inevitable; and the Committee have therefore directed their efforts to the consideration of those safeguards which would reduce its risks to a minimum.¹

Again, in Illinois a working week of seventy hours is not illegal for women in normal times of peace, but the Committee on the Health of Munition Workers found a working week of this length uneconomical even under the stress of war conditions. Thus the memorandum on "Hours of Labour"² contains the following statement:

The Committee are satisfied that the strain of long hours is serious, and they are of opinion that continuous work in excess of the normal legal limit of 60 hours per week ought to be discontinued as soon as practicable, though

¹ Health of Munition Workers' Committee, *Memorandum No. 4*, "Employment of Women" (Cd. 8185, p. 4).

² *Idem.*, *Memorandum No. 5*, "Hours of Work" (Cd. 8186).

they think that some greater elasticity of hours might be allowed than is provided for by the Factory Acts, and they see, for instance, little objection to such moderate overtime during the week as can be compensated for by an earlier stop on Saturdays. . . . The Committee feel that the need for overtime amongst women and girls is much less pressing than it is for men; they are rarely employed on highly skilled work, and where there is still a good reserve of labour there should be little difficulty in gradually introducing shifts, or in other ways redistributing the work among a large number of operatives. They strongly urge that wherever practical overtime should be abandoned in favour of shifts.

Illinois has not yet provided by legislation for "one day's rest in seven," but again the Committee on Health of Munition Workers recommends such a break in the working week as necessary even under war conditions. On this point the report on the "Employment of Women"¹ contains the following statement:

The week-end rest has been found to be a factor of such importance in maintaining health and vigour that it has been reinstated by employers who had taken it for work at the beginning of the war. The Committee are strongly of opinion that for women and girls a portion of Saturday and the whole of Sunday should be available for rest, and that the periodic factory holidays should not, on any account, be omitted.

It is important to note, moreover, that the economy of shorter hours was demonstrated by some experiments concerning output in relation to hours of work undertaken by medical experts for the commission. It was shown, for example, that "to attain a maximum output women engaged in moderately heavy manual labor should not work for more than sixty hours per week," and it is also said to be "probable that the sixty hours per week were still too many to give the best total output."²

It will be interesting indeed if it is left for the greatest war in history to prove finally and conclusively that long hours, night work, and Sunday labor must be abolished, not only to safeguard the health of the women employed, but to promote the efficiency of industry.

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¹ Health of Munition Workers' Committee, *Memorandum No. 4* (Cd. 8185).

² *Statistical Information concerning Output in Relation to Hours of Work*, collected by H. M. Vernon, M.D. *Memorandum No. 12*. (Cd. 8344).